ASAALT PROVIDES WARFIGHTERS REAL-TIME SUPPORT

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Introduction

"An AH-64 has crash-landed in the CJTF-180 AOR [area of responsibility]."

With the receipt of this message, the Crisis Action Team (CAT) in the Army Operations Center (AOC) springs into action. As the various staff representatives begin to piece together information about the incident, the Logistics Operation Center (LOC) representative contacts the LOC and begins a series of actions that will lead to a coordinated effort to assist the unit in the field. The Medical Liaison Officer (LNO) determines the status of the injuries to the pilots and assists in arranging their evacuation to Germany for further evaluation and recovery.

The LOC Officer-In-Charge, working with the Sustainment and Aviation LNOs, determines where a potential replacement for the AH-64 is located. In the meantime, the Transportation LNO assesses the availability of the transportation assets to move a replacement helicopter to the AOR. And finally, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Acquisition, Logistics and Technology (OASAALT) LNO begins working with the Department of the Army Systems Coordinator (DASC) for Apache helicopters and the Program Executive Officer (PEO), Aviation, to evaluate the contractor's AH-64 production plan and ensure that future fielding will meet the needs of warfighters.

The above scenario is an example of actions that occur numerous times during the day in the life of the LOC, as our soldiers engage potential worldwide threats in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Noble Eagle. In the LOC, OASAALT personnel, with the assistance of the DASCs, program managers (PMs), and PEOs, dedicate themselves to procuring, fielding, and coordinating the delivery of those items that provide our soldiers a formidable advantage on the battlefield.

Full-Time Operation

As previously stated, the LOC is collocated with the CAT in the AOC, which is located in the Pentagon. The LOC is a full-time operation that is manned at a minimal level during peacetime. However, the events of September 11, 2001, changed that. Immediately following the attack on the Pentagon, the CAT was activated and the LOC fully staffed. Most of the other sections represented in the LOC (e.g., force projection, sustainment, and medical logistics) filled their personnel requirements with individual mobilization augmentees (IMAs). These IMAs are available for emergencies such as that experienced on September 11. In contrast, the OASAALT initially filled its LOC position with Active duty officers on a rotational basis from its organization in the Pentagon.

Frontline Interface

In the normal course of resolving daily issues, the OASAALT LNO provides the frontline interface with the staffs of the Army G-3, Army G-4, and Army G-8 as well as the combat units in the AOR. The LNO handles requests from the various agencies or units for items that are in the development or fielding process. The LNO also determines if an item is available in the timeframe requested by the agency or unit. The OASAALT leadership recognized that the original staffing process that rotated Active duty officers was less than optimal because it did not represent the Army acquisition community with continuity.

Just prior to the initiation of Operation Anaconda, OASAALT leaders determined if an OASAALT IMA was available to fill the OASAALT LNO position in the LOC. COL Terry Mathews (co-author of this article), a Drilling IMA from the OASAALT-Army Tactical Operations Center (ARTOC) organization, agreed to fill this important role. As Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Noble Eagle progressed, the OASAALT concluded that another LNO would be needed for two reasons: to provide 24-hour continuous coverage within the LOC, and because operations would most likely extend beyond Mathews' initial 1-year mobilization period. Thus,

COL Michael Mergens (co-author of this article), another ARTOC IMA, was approached and subsequently mobilized in June 2002.

Operating Procedures

Immediately after mobilization, Mathews defined the procedures for resolving requests and taskers given to the OASAALT LNO and incorporated them into a standard operating procedure as follows:

- The OASAALT LNO makes initial contact to clarify the warfighter's issue or requirement.
- The LNO provides the request to the Army G-3, Department of the Army Military Operations ((DAMO)-Force Modernization) to determine if the warfighter's request is valid and to the Army G-8, Programming (DAMO-Force Development) to determine how the request will be funded.
- The LNO informs the appropriate DASC or PM to assist the G-3 or G-8 as required.
- The LNO ensures the DASC and PM work together to bring the warfighter's request to an acceptable conclusion.

Teamwork Example

The replacement and return of potentially defective small arms protective insert (SAPI) plates provides one of the best examples of the teamwork required to implement the procedure. SAPI plates are the key components of interceptor body armor (IBA), the next generation of body armor that is currently being fielded. The plates are made of a ceramic material with much higher stopping power than the current "flak vests" made with Kevlar. An IBA consists of an outer tactical vest and two SAPI plates.

The replacement and return of the potentially defective SAPI plates began when PM, Soldier received test results that indicated certain lots had failed. There was an immediate concern that potentially defective plates had been issued to troops in the field. The CAT levied a requirement, in the form of a tasker, for the OASAALT to coordinate the location, collection, and return of the potentially defective plates to the San Joaquin Army Depot. The OASAALT's DASC and PM, Soldier quickly identified the location of potentially defective plates issued to our soldiers in the field. When it was determined that most of the potentially defective SAPI plates had been issued to the 101st Air Assault Division (AAD) in Afghanistan, this action received congressional and senior Army leadership attention.

The DASC and PM reasoned that the initial solution should be to immediately ship replacement SAPI plates to the 101st AAD. The depots were notified to prepare replacement plates for shipment and, with the assistance of the LOC Force Projection and Distribution Team, the 101st AAD received their replacements within days.

The next action the DASC and PM needed to implement was the return of the potentially defective SAPI plates to the San Joaquin Depot. The OASAALT LNO assisted the DASC and PM by publishing an official HQDA message stating the procedures that should be used to return the affected SAPI plates. Again with the help of the LOC Force Projection and Distribution Team, the OASAALT LNO, DASC, and PM tracked the return of the SAPI plates to CONUS. The teamwork demonstrated by all those involved in the solution of this issue is an example of the kind of real-time, real-world support the OASAALT team provides to soldiers in the field.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the OASAALT LNOs are Reserve officers mobilized specifically to represent the OASAALT in the AOC. Mathews and Mergens are proof that the OASAALT has fully embraced the concept of "One Army." The OASAALT's career officers and civilians unhesitatingly and professionally accepted these Reserve officers as equals. Both Mathews and Mergens agree that the opportunity to work with the OASAALT's military and civilian workforce has been very gratifying.

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